

## ***City kids dig fresh carrots!***

What kid doesn't love crispy, crunchy, sun-sweetened, just-picked fruits and veggies?! They all do! The problem is not convincing kids to eat these foods but rather figuring out a way to put these healthier food options within reach. Luckily, food grown by nearby farms (both in and around the city) offer that unbeatable flavor and freshness. Knowing this, our Farm to School subcommittee set to work to connect farms and schools in the Providence Region.

## ***Healthy communities and local family farms go hand-in-hand!***

Linking farms and schools is a great idea: Not only is the food fresher (which translates into kids eating more healthfully) but connecting city kids with the open space that surrounds them (both in the city and on the outskirts) is the simplest form of environmental education. Tomorrow's citizens need to know what fertile soil and open space means to them. They need to know where food comes from.

## ***The idea needs to grow!***

Over that past year, our Farm to School Subcommittee has brought together the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management/Division of Agriculture, the Rhode Island Department of Health, Southside Community Land Trust, Kids First, and Farm Fresh Rhode Island to collaborate around this goal. We have searched for funding for a state-wide Farm to School coordinator and have raised \$12,000 so far. We set a goal of having every school district in Rhode Island (36!) make at least one local purchase by Fall 2007. We assisted in the planning of a local school district corn-shucking event in September 2005, which attracted lots of media attention and the attention of our state leaders. We helped with introducing legislation that offers a financial incentive to businesses for purchasing RI-grown foods. We have revised the RI Healthy Schools Coalition *Model Policy Language for School District Nutrition* to include Farm-to-School language and have included Farm-to-School materials in RI Department of Health toolkits for RI school district's Wellness Subcommittees. We hosted a "Local Food Forum" to bring school food service directors together with farmers and attracted over a hundred participants including our State's Directors of Health and Environmental Management. We networked with colleagues across the Northeast. We advocated for a USDA Free Fruit and Vegetable Program in Rhode Island. We initiated a "Happy Apple Award" for schools who successfully connect with local farmers.

And this is just the beginning...